Your right in the seasonal work in France 2026

Introduction

We've rarely seen the results of syndicalism in the agricultural world. The precariousness of our jobs, and its ittinerant aspect makes activism a complicated task. But it shouldn't have to be : we know how to be in solidarity with one another, and we know the value of our work.

This pamphlet aims at giving some legal tools to the friends who would need them. Its not a definitive reference, as law constantly evolves, but it should give you a solid base to understand your rights and how to defend them.

Wether you're isolated or not, get in touch with struggling unions (CNT, SUD, CGT) near you. They'll be delighted to help you the best they can in edging your strengh against your employer.

You can also look on the side of the spanish language blog "El eco saisonnier", from which the content can be translated, because they do incredible work, especially towards foreign workers. Wether french or not, you have the same rights. We've already seen, in many exploitations, a difference of pay and working conditions depending on the nationality of the workers. That's illegal.

In France, every law in its most recent version is available on the website Légifrance. You will find in this pamphlet many references in the form of "[L3121-16 du Code du Travail]" which relates to the law by numbers in the codification of working laws. Use this number by typing "L3121-16" in Legifrance's search engine as to find the exact legal article as its writen. Then you can check if our "translation" is correct and the law has not changed since.

For a more digest rendition of the raw legal texts, the website of service-public.fr is giving examples of most situations.

Institutions

France Travail (formerly known as “Pȯle Emploi”) et your rights to unemployment benefitso

Despite the specific working conditions, seasonal work is required to the same standards as other types of work when it comes to unemployment benefits. The conditions are identical to any other individual deprived of a job. France Travail, formerly known as “Pôle Emploi”) is the public institution that manages your access to unemployment benefits, mainly through the social benefits of ARE, or Aide au Retour à l’Emploi. That is where you should declare your sessions of work, as to receive your unemployment benefits..

Suggestions:

– Remain registered at all time, even when you’re working, as to avoid interruption in the payment of your benefits, and reduce the delays in getting your payments after the end of the season.

– Transmit them your payment slips when you receive them, as to reduce the delays in the payment of your benefits.

– Under some conditions, it is possible to receive both salaries and unemployment benefits, if the amount of hours worked during the month is low.

– Declare systematicaly your times of work, and wait if possible, the end of your old benefits before going back to long-term employment, as to not interrupt your current benefit rights.

– For seasonal workers, 5 months of work (108 days, or 758 hours) in the last 24 months are enough to give you access to unemployment benefits, (as opposed to 6 months for other types of jobs).

– The days not worked are taken into account in the calculations of your average day salary.

Beware: If you don't declare your income slips, or your sessions of work, France Travail can suspend the payment of your benefits, or recalculate your rights retroactively.

MSA

As to be covered when you're sick, hurt, or for a later pension, you absolutely need to be affiliated to the agricultural plan.

The MSA, or Mutualité Sociale Agricole is structure handling the unemployment, social security and pensions of agricultural workers, both owner/managers and wage-workers. They're the ones giving all of the benefits to which you can qualify in matters of health, family, working accidents and professional diseases.

Your employer is required to declare you to the MSA before your first day on the job. This declaration is mandatory. Check that your social security number is on each of your salary slips. If this number isn't there, it means you haven't been declared by your employer. This affiliation has to be active on your first day on the job.

Working conditions

Contract, paperwork

The temporary contract for seasonal workers is the most precarious of the CDD (Contrat à Durée Limitée, or Contract limited in time). The main difference is that, rather than defining a precise date for the end of work, this one ends when the job is done.

Howether the contracts needs to mention the minimum estimate for the duration of work. The seasonal CDD cannot be used for a permanent task, for example the

milking of cows [L1242-2 et L1242-7 of the work code] The benefits for precariousness (*Prime de precarité*), (10% of the salary before tax) which is mandatory in the classic CDD isn't in our case. [L1243-10 of the work code]

The employer as to give, within 48 hours of starting the job, a contract stipulating the minimum duration of the work, the lengh of the trial period, the name of the job and which "convention collective" (collective bargaining agreement) is being used.

At the end of your contract, your bosses are required to give you :

- A certificate of employment (dated and signed, as justification for the period of employment).

- a final settlement of all accounts (summary of all the payments made, or to expect from the employer).

- an attestation for France Travail (very important).

Strategic advice: never sign your settlement of all accounts. *(solde tout compte.)*

Signing it = accepting that everything is good AND reduces the time limit to contest it to only 6 months [L1234-20 in the work code]. After 6 months, this documents becomes "liberatory" fo your employer : you will no longer be in a position to contest what's writen on it.

Refusing to sign it doesn't block anything : your employer still has to pay you the amount writen on it even without your signature, but it leaves you with a minimum of two years to contest it at the prud'hommes (the work-related court) : the limits are therefore 3 years for matters of salary, and 5 for discrimination or harassment.

Not-signing gives you time to check on your rights without pressure, compare with the collective bargaining, and take contact with unions if necessary.

La Convention Collective

A *Convention collective* (Collective agreements) is a text that precises the working conditions for a type of activities. It completes and gives precisions to the national code of labor. Usualy, collective bargaining are more in favor of the workers than the Work code.

Collective agreements are negotiated between unions of bosses, and unions of workers representatives.

If you have a doubt about which collective agreements is regulating your work, it should be writen on your contract or your payment slips.

Since September 2020, there is a national collective agreements for "agricultural production/CUMA (for Coopérative d'utilisation de matériel agricole, cooperative for the use of agricultural equipment). This one doesn't replace the local bargaining but comes to complete them.

If two collective agreements are contradicting each other, its the one most in favor of workers that prevails. To find your collective agreements : https://code.travail.gouv.fr/outils/convention-collective

Practical tip : download and print out the PDF of your collective agreements, or keep it on your phone. There won't necessarily be a network connexion or wifi access on your place of work. Having the text at hand helps you check on your rights at all time, and confront the boss on their obligations when they try to confuse you. You can find it on Légifrance or on the website mentionned above.

Piecework

Some employers in produce farming or fruit picking are suggesting a pay "à la tâche" (piece work, for a kilo of beans or potatoes,...) Piece work is illegal if it means you would be payd less than the SMIC (Minimum salary,

which is 12,31€ an hour, before tax on the 1st of june 2026, or about 10,04€ after tax)

In the vinyards, piece work still exists but is legaly framed by local agreements (in the region or département) that stipulates the amount of hours estimated as well as the amount of plants under “normal” conditions (clean & maintained vines).

In this case, you can decide for yourself how to organise your working schedule, in relation to legal obligations for daily and weekly breaks.

If you’re a group working in the same field with a piece work contract, each of you need to have a contract. Being helped by friends or family to execute a piece work contract could allow your boss to fire you.el 1 de junio de 2026, aproximadamente 10,04€ netos).

Schedules & holidays

You have a right to a mimimum of a 20 min break for each 6 hours of work, and at least one day off a week. [L3121-16 of the work code]

Your boss cannot make you work for more than 10 hours in the same day (8 hours if you’re younger than 18). [L3121-18 of the work code]

They also do not have the right to make you work more than 48 hours within the same week. [L3121-20 of the work code]

The first of may is the international day of worker’s struggles. This day is off (not worked) and paid 100%. If you’re working on that day, you should be paid double.

Other public holidays have to be paid after three months spent in the business. For seasonal contracts, contracts from previous years comes into account for the calculation

of this lengh of service, as the duration doesn't have to be consecutive. [L3133-1 to L3133-3 of the work code] consecutivos [L3133-1 a L3133-3 del Code du Travail].

Wage & time off

The hourly minimum wage in France is 12,31€ before tax (including social contributions) as of the 1st of June 2026, which is approximately 10,04€ after tax (what you get in effect) for an adult. Before tax is called "brut" and after tax is called "net."

Before the 1st of June 2026 (January through May), the minimum wage was 12,02€ an hour, before tax..

For underage workers :

- Under 18 years, with less than 6 months of experience in the field of work : 90% of the minimum wage, meaning 11,08€ an hour, before tax.

- 17 years old : 85% of the minimum wage = 10,46€ an hour, before tax (approximately 8,52€ after tax).

- 16 years old : 80% of the minimum wage = 9,85€ an hour, before tax (approximately 7,88€ after tax).

Additional hours are accounted by the week, once you're working over 35 hours a week. The first additional 8 hours, starting on the 43rd, are paid 25% more. From the 44th, they're paid 50% more.

Beware, seasonal workers are not allowed to work more than 40 additional hours per trimester.. [L3121-36 of the work code]

As with other contracts, seasonal limited lengh contract have a right to 2,5 days of paid days off per month worked, including if the worker is not working full time. In the case of the days off are not taken during the contract (that's generally the case for seasonal work), the seasonal

worker gets a compensations for paid days off amounting to 10% of their “brut” wage, additional hours included.

Hygiene in the work place

Wether or not you sleep there, your employer has to have accessible sinks in a satisfactory amount (at least 1 sink per 10 workers) with drinkable water.

Within the place of work of the business, there should be ::

- 1 closed toilet.
- 1 urinal for 20 men, 2 closed toilets for 20 women, arranged in a way to not release any smell, suffieciently heated and ventilated, stocked in toilet paper.

Workplace accident

Agriculture is particularly dangerous and exposed to work related accidents, especially due to:

- Powerful machines, sometimes dangerous (tractors, harvesters, powered tools).
- Phytosanitary products, which an exposition to can cause severe illnesses.
- Heavy manipulations and repetition of intense efforts.
- Repetitive tasks slowly using the bodies.

Outside work, exposed to the weather variations and multiple risks.A workplace accident has to be notified quickly. The employer has to make a declaration to the MSA, as required by law. It is not up to them to judge the legitimacy of the accident.

In case of a workplace accident, you need to notify your employer within 24 hours. They themselves have 48 hours to notify the MSA and give you an accident sheet. If they do not do it in time, you can get in touch with the MSA

and the DREETS (Direction Régionale de l'Economie, de l'Emploi du Travail et des Solidarités, a bureaucracy administrating work for each french region) to inform them on the matter. You can also make the declaration yourself directly to the MSA within two years [L411-1 of the Social Security code]. In regards to accidents, your employer should be tempted to minimize the situation:

- Do not ever accept an accident to be presented as a simple incident

- Systematically ask for an official declaration. If your employer refuses, make a complaint directly to the MSA.

- Get yourself some help through the paperwork if necessary, get in touch with an union who could help you fill the forms and defend yourself.

If you get into an accident between your house and your place of work, it is considered as a workplace accident, and opens your rights to benefits. A logical detour between your place of work and your house (such as making groceries or picking children from school) is still considered to be part of your transit to work.

Living conditions

Housing

There are no law forcing your employer to house you. But it is frequent that bosses do offer housing for their workers, deducted from their salaries. Living conditions are often precarious, but there is a legal minimum [R719-7 of the rural code]. Precise conditions are defined in [R716-1 to R716-16-1 of the rural code]:

- The housing shouldn't be a tent nor a basement.

- You need to have access to clean drinking water of manageable temperature and to heating.

- There should be windows with curtains or blinds posibilidad de regular la temperatura.

- Maximum of 6 people per room, with toilets and showers. In case of dormitories, men and women should be separated. Bunk beds are forbidden.

- Minimum surface of 9m² if the kitchen is separated, otherwise 12m². 7m² should be added per each additional person.

- The employer has an obligation to take on themselves to clean the bedsheets once every two weeks.

- You should be able to lock with a key at will.

If people in particularly vulnerable conditions are submitted to working and housing conditions "incompatible with human dignity," the employer risks up to 5 years of prison and 150 000 fines. [225-14 of the penal code]

The employer can asks to a derogations of 30 days maximum, for the right to house workers in tents. Such derogation is only possible from the 1st of June to the 15th of September. [Article R716-16 of the rural code]

End of contract & housing

When your temporary seasonal contract comes to an end, so does your right to housing given by your employer. In principle, you need to give back the keys and leave.

Howether, precedents recognises a two months notice when the housing is furnished (its mostly the case) in order to pick up your belongings and organise your departure. This notice cannot be longer without your approval, and has to ideally be precised in your contract, or communicated by your employer before it takes effect.

In fact, most employers will ask you to vacate immediately, but you have rights. If your employer wants you to leave too quickly for your convenience, an union, or work inspection could help you negotiate a more reasonable notice.

Housing benefits

"Action Logement" offers financial help going up to 600€ a year for seasonal agricultural workers, in order to help with your housing cost during your working contracts. This help is renewable every year. Informations and forms on actionlogement.fr.

Transportation

In principle, your transit between house & work is not considered in your work time, and therefore not paid. [collective bargaining "Production agricole" & CUMA].

Howether, your employer needs to refund at least 50% of the cost to your public transportation plan. If there are no public transportation available in your proximity, and they offer collective transportations, those need to conform to security norms (approved vehicles, certified drivers, respect to the resting measures).

For underaged workers, these obligations are more strict: employers are mandated to guarantee a safe and adapted transportation to the work schedule.

Children's schooling

In France, instruction is mandatory for children from 3 to 16, whatever their nationality or the administrative situation of their parents [L131-1 of the education code]. A public school cannot refuse their inscription on the basis of their nationality or their administrative status.

Entitled by your seasonal contract, you have a right to sign up your kids to the school of your temporary residence, or the one of your place of work.

To sign them up :

- Kindergarten & elementary school : to to the city house (service of schooling) with your work contract or an attestation from your employer justifying your residency in the territory.

- Middleschool & Highschool : the rectorat goes through the CASNAV, which will evaluate the level of the children in order to affect them to a class.

Documents to provide : identification documents, or family booklet, justification for housing (or attestation from your employer if you are housed within the exploitation), as well as the titre de séjour or visa of the parent, even if expired.

If your children doesn't speak french, they can benefit from a free linguistic tutorship through the classes of the UPE2A (pedagocical units for newly arrived non-french speakers), integrated to the public schools.

Tools – Where to get informations from?

Knowing your rights is good, but knowing who to talk with when it doesn't work, is better. This part is listing the structures you can turn to for informations, to get help from or to notify when there are abuses. All of these procedures are free, and for the most part confidential.

Unions

An union, in french syndicat, is an organisation of workers struggling together to defend their right and better their working conditions. Whatever your type of contract, your nationality of the lengh of your job, you have a right to be affiliated to an union [L2142-1 of the working code]. It is a fundamental right garanteed by law. The struggling unions mentionned in this pamphlet :

- CNT (Confédération Nationale du Travail) — anarco-communist syndicalism, anti-autoritarian.

- SUD (Solidaires) — combative syndicalism, close to social & environmental struggles .

- CGT (Confédération Générale du Travail) — historical union, present in many segments of the agricultural work.

What they can do for you:

- Get you informations on your rights, for free, and independently from your employer

- Walk you through administrative steps with institutions (France Travail, MSA)

- Help you in case of conflicts with your employer : unpaid work, illegal working conditions, abusive termination of contract.

- Representing you at the prud'hommes (work related court) if it needs to get there.

- Apply collective pressure on your employer in case of conflict (gatherings, blockades, mediation).

Contact with an union is confidential. Your employer doesn't have to know you got in touch, and even less that you're an union member. Discrimination on the basis of your unionship is illegal [L2142-1 et L1132-1 of the working code]. Even if you are isolated within an exploitation, that you work in a rural area far from anything, a phone call or an email is enough to get started.

Don't hesitate to get in touch with multiple unions to figure out which one fits the best for you, or who answers the fastest. We're always stronger together than alone when facing a boss. To find the union the closest to your work place, you can search online for "CNT," "SUD" or "CGT" followed by the name of your region or département. Local contacts are often listed on their national websites.

DREETS

The DREETS (Direction Régionale de l'Economie, de l'Emploi, du Travail et des Solidarités) is a governmental administration including among others, the inspection of labor. When your employer breaks the law, they're the ones you need to turn to.

How to get in touch with them

- Phone number : 0 806 000 126 (free service + cost of a local call). Website : https://dreets.gouv.fr

- Online : Through your regional directory.

- Chose your region of work through the website in order to find the local competent unit. You can : ask

freely your questions on your rights.

- Signal dangerous working conditions.

- Ask for your employer to be checked.

- Directly take appointments with an inspector.

When make such signalment?

You can alert the DREETS if you work in dangerous, unhealthy or illegal conditions:

- Protection gear not made available.

- Exposure to phytosanitary products without protection.

- Illegal or unpaid working hours.

- Wage under the minimum (SMIC) or under the amount set by the collective bargaining.

- Absence of contract, or fake content.

What they can do about it:

- Start unexpected checks on your eployers.

- Give immediate orders to protect workers.

- Takes your employer to court.

- Make the citations for all of the infractions noticed

- The inspectors are subjected to professional secret and will never reveal your identity to your boss.

Beware: if your employer learns you made a signalment for something (though someone else, a leak, or otherwise), all reprehensive measures (firing, sanctions, forced removal) will be automatically nulled through a prud'homme court and open you rights to damage compensations.

Guide for the rights of agricultural seasonal workers. Summer 2026

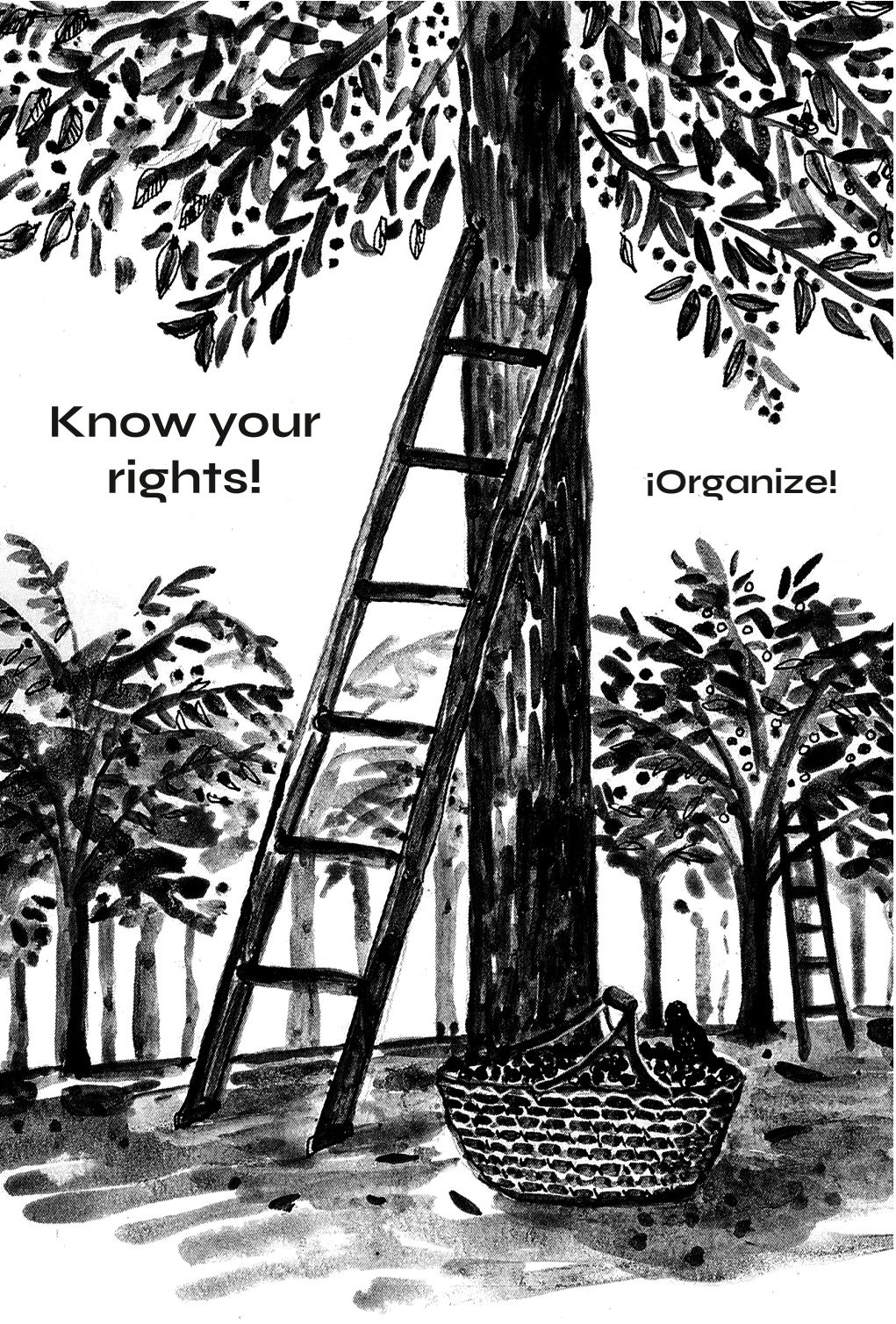
French agriculture relies on the work of dozens of thousands of seasonal workers. They come from France, Spain, Italy, Poland, Maghreb, Eastern Europe or elsewhere and harvest our fruits, trim our vines, cultivate our vegetables. Despite this, the conditions of hospitality, information and the defense of their rights is largely insufficient. Published by the CNT of Saint-Etienne, a first version of this guide had already helped many workers to know and claim their rights. This new printing has been deeply updated for 2026 and takes from this collective work by improving it : update of the index for the minimum wage, new informations on housing, end of contracts, the schooling of kids, including for non-european families, and practical tips and strategies to face your employers.

Divided in five parts, public institutions, conditions of labor, living conditions, and tips & ressources, this guide is made as a field tool: no useless lingo, precise legal references that can be checked on Légifrance, and mostly : practical strategies in order to not let yourself by abused by the bosses. Never sign your settlement of all accounts, knowing how to react to a work accident, know the minimal norms for housing, understanding collective bargaining, know where to find a union, or as much knowledge that make a difference when isolated in the country.

Published simultaneously in french, english, spanish, italian, arabic & russian, this guide will be distributed for free in the farms, meeting places, and through the union network in France and beyond. We invite organisations, collectives and individuals wishing to participate in spreading it to get in touch with the contacts indicated.

This pamphlet is not an exhaustive legal tool. Its a weapon, one that's meant to be read, shared and used on the field or wherever they will need to.

Yo can download the PDF here.


Know your rights!
¡Organize!